

5731 K Robinson 7 Successor of Biddell  
The Benefits and Duty of the Members of  
Christ's Kingdom.

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A  
S E R M O N

Preached in the Parish-Church of  
St. SEPULCHRE,

May 20. M. DCC. XIV.

BEING

Thursday in WHITSON-WEEK,

AT THE

Anniversary Meeting of the CHILDREN  
Educated in the Charity-Schools, in and  
about the Cities of London and Westminster.

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Publisb'd at the Request of several Gentlemen  
concern'd in that CHARITY.

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By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,  
<sup>Robinson</sup>JOHN, Lord Bishop of LONDON.

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St. MATTHEW XIX. *Vers.* 14.

----- *Of such is the Kingdom of  
Heaven.*

**T**HE inimitable Sanctity which shone with so much Lustre in the Life, and Actions of our Lord Jesus Christ, had mov'd some Persons, piously-dispos'd, as we may well conclude, to bring little Children, that he might, according to the Ceremony frequent among the *Jews*, lay his Hands upon them, pray for, and bless them. This our Lord's Disciples, who knew not yet what Spirit their Master, and themselves were of, looked upon as too bold an Intrusion, and opposed it; but were blam'd, and order'd to suffer little Children, and not forbid them to come to Christ; and that for a Reason the Disciples would scarce have comprehended, if it had not been told them in the Words of this Text; *Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*: that is, Little Children are not only capable, notwithstanding their tender Age, to become Members of Christ; but they, and others endow'd with such Qualifications as are most observable in Children, are the constituent Parts of this Kingdom: And then, by the Rule of Correlation, as



that Kingdom is composed of them, so they do thereby belong to it. Now, to belong to any Kingdom, as a Subject-Member of it, implies, in its first and most obvious Sense, both a Benefit and a Duty; on the one Hand, Protection; and on the other, Obedience: And the Kingdom of Heaven includes both the Kingdom of Grace and of Glory. So that in these Words we have chiefly to consider, *The great Benefits* exhibited; *The Duty* required; and *The Qualifications* supposed: Which is the Order I intend to observe in speaking to you upon these Words, and on this Occasion.

And first, of the *Benefits* of being Members of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the Extent I have told you that Expression imports, with reference, namely, both to this present Life, and that which is to come.

It is a Principle supposed in my Text, and self-evident to all that own a God, and his Providence, and another World, that *the Kingdom is the Lord's, and that He is Governor among the People*; as also that *He, even the Lord of Hosts, is the King of Glory*; a King, as St. Paul speaks, *Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only Wise God*.

This Truth appeared even in the midst of Heathen Darkness, and to it they generally give Witness: The Apostle therefore argued with the *Athenians* upon an avowed Topick,



Topick, that all Men are the *Offspring of God*; that *in Him they live, move, and have their Being*; and accordingly, as his Creatures, are subject to his Dominion, and Members of his Kingdom here upon Earth; so it was from the Creation, and so it will be to the World's End.

Nevertheless, as after God had called *Abraham*, and entered into Covenant with him, and his Posterity, that He would be their God, and they should be his People, in a more peculiar Manner than He was the God of the other Nations of the World, or those Nations were his People; so the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth, must import a distinguishing Favour; and that those who are the Subjects of it, are Partakers of some peculiar Advantages and Benefits, that are not enjoy'd in common by the rest of Mankind.

Now these Advantages must arise from something peculiar, either to the Institution, or the Conduct, *i. e.* either to the Laws, or the Administration of such a Kingdom: For no Government is better than another, as to the Benefit arising to the Parties governed; but as its Laws are more wise and useful, and the Execution of them more faithful and regular than those of other Nations.

Accordingly, to be convinced of the great Benefits of being in, or of, the Kingdom of Heaven, you need only observe, that as it appears from the History of the Old Testament, that the most High, both as their Lawgiver and Governour, ruled the Nation of the *Jews* in a more gracious and beneficent Manner, than what the rest of the World then enjoy'd ; so much more graciously, and with a more tender Care and Concern, does our Lord Jesus Christ exercise that Universality of Power, both in Heaven and Earth, which the Father has given him over the Subjects of his Kingdom ; that is, over those that, by the federal Right of Baptism, are initiated into the Covenant of Grace, and abide in that Grace ; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth ; and, as such, they have the great Advantage of being directed by Laws, that so plainly chalk out their Rule of Duty, that he that *runs may read, and learn what it is that our Lord and Governour requires* of us, in order to do Him Service, and promote our own Happiness. Laws not more plain and intelligible to every well-disposed and teachable Mind, than exactly suited both to the Notions of our own Reason, and to the Relief of those Frailties and Infirmities, with which humane Nature, in its lapsed State, is beset and encompassed. They teach us how to preserve our Innocency, and  
how

how to recover it ; how to live in all Godliness and Honesty ; and when therein we have fail'd, how to do Works meet for Repentance, and for the Recovery of his Grace and Favour.

In like gracious Manner does our heavenly King watch over us for Good, in all the Course of our Life here upon Earth. From a State of spiritual Slavery, and of Subjection to our greatest and most pernicious Enemies, He has purchased us to Himself, and for our Redemption paid a greater Price than all created Nature could ever have furnish'd. Himself, from his Throne of Glory, descended upon Earth, took our Nature upon him, submitted to all, but Sin only, that in a mortal State can be called miserable ; liv'd in a mean and despised Condition, and dy'd in the greatest Degrees of Pain and Ignominy ; and having thus, by a Merit unspeakable, because infinite, made us His, by Methods of unparallel'd Mercy, He does all on his Part to keep us so. Not the Tenderness of a Mother towards her sucking Infant, not the Care of the Apple of an Eye, not the Watchfulness of a Shepherd over his Flock, or the Faithfulness of a good Steward, nothing that can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive, can, in any Degree of Proportion, represent, much less equal, his Love and Care of us.



By his holy Doctrine and Example, He directs our Paths; by his Spirit, He enables us both to will and to do; by his Providence, He makes all things work together for our Good; by the Assurance of Rewards, He invites us; by the Terrors of most severe Penalties, He restrains our Aberrations; and when at any Time He calls us to suffer for his Sake, it is with express Purpose, that such Sufferings shall be short in their Duration, and their Reward endless; that *our light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, in that Kingdom of Glory, which is it self eternal in the Heavens.*

In this World we can have but transient Rewards, as well as Sufferings; for neither we, nor it, are of any permanent Duration: The Fashion of it, the Scheme of things, whether grateful or uneasy to us, soon passes away, and soon also we are gone, and all our earthly Thoughts perish, and our temporal Rewards or Sufferings come to an End; but in the World to come, Mortality will put on Incorruption, and neither the Joys of the Blessed ever be abated, nor the Worm of the Tormented ever die, or the Fire be quenched. I will not suppose any that I now speak to, is fallen under Delusions so contradictory to the most connate Notions of our Minds, to the general Consent  
of

of Mankind, and to the loud Voice of Reason, as well as Revelation, as to doubt of this Principle, that there will, in a future State, be a Day of Retribution, in which *they that have done good, shall receive their good things; and they that have done evil, shall be tormented.*

The Consequence of this is, that as in this Life, the faithful Subjects and Servants of Christ our Lord, are his peculiar Care; so in his Kingdom of Glory, he will be their exceeding great Reward; and these two together, make up the Benefits that accrue unto those that are of the Kingdom of Heaven: Benefits, which I can the less pretend fully to display to you, because if even the Tongue of an Angel should be employ'd to speak of them, they would be more than he could be able to express; or you, till you have put off Mortality, be able to comprehend. Let it then suffice, that even the faint and imperfect Idea that has been laid before you, of the Advantages arising from being of the Kingdom of Heaven, obliges all those that pretend to reap those Advantages, to make those Returns upon which only they can have a Title to them; that is, that the Protection, and all the blessed Consequents of it, which Christ our Lord exhibits on his Part to those that are of his Kingdom, be answered by such an Obedience

dience as he requires, and will accept ; which is the *Second Matter* I am to speak to.

And upon this Subject I shall need to speak the less, because it is so evident in it self, that, as we are the Creatures of God, as we are the Redeemed of the Lord, as we are Parties to a solemn Contract and Covenant between God and Man, as we are under the Government and Protection of Heaven, we are ty'd by the Bonds of Duty, of Gratitude, of Justice, and of Interest, to perform the Conditions that result from these several Relations. Now what these Conditions are, you cannot be ignorant ; for, I hope, even these almost Babes and Sucklings, that are now before you, can tell how far our Obligation extends in this Case ; that, namely, in order to prepare the Way of the Lord, and render us capable to receive the Participation of his Grace, we have promised to renounce all Adherence to his and our Enemies, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil ; that, to get a Foundation of our Interest in Christ, we are engaged to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, because without such Faith, it is impossible to please God ; there not being in Nature any other System of Truths, that can have a sufficient Influence upon our Understanding and Wills, so as to produce in us such a Submission and Conformity to the Will of  
God,



God, as shall render us acceptable to Him, and secure our Right in his Promises. And as *Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*; so every thing that is requisite to inform our Minds, and bring us to a perfect Knowledge of the Religion, which Christ our Lord came to reveal, and introduce into the World, is compris'd under this Branch of our Obligation. And how many are there that would be willing to stop here? How many that, by a fatal Error, are led to rely upon the Pretence of a lifeless and unactive Faith, and to fancy that this alone, without Obedience, can avail to their Salvation? But *we have not so learned Christ*; for so far even infernal Spirits have learn'd Him, to the Amazement of their Minds, and Encrease of their Despair and Condemnation. The Doctrines therefore of Salvation go farther, and teach us to add to our Faith, Virtue; and to our Knowledge, its perfect Work, that is, Obedience, which is a natural and necessary Consequence of our being Members of the Kingdom of Christ; and through the whole Contexture of the holy Scriptures, so positively insisted on, that no Truth can stand in a clearer Light. 'Tis expressly declared to be the End for which Christ took our Nature upon Him, and we may justly esteem it to be the End for which God made the World, and stocked it with reasonable Creatures, capable of understanding

ing his Will, and their Obligations to obey it. All the Blessings of this Life, all the Promises of a better, so intimately depend upon this Principle, that no other Reason can be assign'd, why Mankind should be distinguished from the rest of the Creation, by the Promise of Rewards, or the Threatnings of Punishments; it being contrary to the Nature of both, to be apply'd, without some Ground of Distinction arising from the different Qualification of the Objects. This Difference is sufficiently expressed in the first Alternative we meet with in the Word of God, before the Fall of Man; and yet more fully in the Second, after his Fall. The first, is *Genesis ii. 16, 17. Of every Tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the Day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* The other, is in *Genesis iv. 7. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, Sin lieth at the Door.* Shall I need to lead you from these Decisions, in and after the State of Innocence, through the *Mosaical* Dispensation, and then through the Gospel Oeconomy? It cannot surely be needful. For in both, this Truth is so universally spread, that you can scarce read one Chapter, without finding either Blessings actually exhibited, or plainly promised to the Obedient; or Punishments inflicted or threatned to Disobedience.

dience. This is so essential to the very Being of any Government, to the Justice of God, to our most natural Impressions of the Difference between Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, that I cannot think it necessary farther to employ your Patience, in pressing this general Assertion, That as we are of, and belong to, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Blessings and Protection of it belong to us; so it is indispensably incumbent on us, to make the Returns of a sincere, universal, and constant Obedience, which are the only Qualifications of this our Duty, I shall at present mention, and that in a few Words.

To be unsincere in our Obedience to our earthly Superiours, can never be without Guilt; to God, never without the greatest Folly: The former, our Hypocrisy may possibly impose upon; the latter, we can never deceive; because, though our Hearts be inscrutable to Men; yet they, and all things, are open to Him, with whom we have to do; nay, better known to Him than to our selves. All the Springs of our Actions, which our selves are too frequently prone to ascribe to those Motives that ought to be uppermost, are, by Him, infallibly attributed to their proper and true Causes; and too oft the Deceitfulness of our Heart persuades us, that we are only aiming at the Glory of God, when to Him it is evident,  
that



that we are serving some earthly End, and instead of performing, are quite going astray from our Duty. Nothing therefore can be greater than the Danger of our Insincerity in the Service of God; and consequently our Care to avoid it, can never be too great, nor ever sufficient, unless we fix upon this Principle, that our Happiness depends upon God's Approbation; and his Approbation, upon our Singleness of Heart, and sincere Intentions, to do all to the Praise and Glory of God, preferably to any other Consideration.

To do all, I say, and that infers the Universality of our Obedience, prescrib'd by the Rule both of the Law and Gospel: In the one we are told, *it shall be our Righteousness, if we observe to do all these Commandments before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us*; in the other, it is our Saviour's Injunction to his Disciples, *Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*. David therefore found it his Duty, and made it his Study, to take the Laws of God in their full Extent, and have respect to them all without Exception; and that because they are all enacted by the same Authority, and therefore are of equal Obligation; though indeed not at all Times so, as to our actual Obedience, by reason of the Difference between affirmative and negative Precepts. The Observance of the latter, is

at all Times strictly our Duty, and we can never be at Liberty to act contrary to any of them. There is no Period of our Life wherein we may, without Guilt, be Idolaters, worship Images, take the Name of God in vain, commit Murder, Adultery, Theft, bear false Witness, or covet our Neighbour's Goods. But the positive Precepts, though they be always our Duty, cannot always be actually our Practice. Our Hands, for Example, must, in the proper Seasons, be lifted up in Prayer to God, at other Times extended to relieve the Poor, and frequently employ'd in the Duties of our Calling. In these Respects therefore, it is the Disposition of our Hearts that God accepts; and we may have good Hope of such Acceptance, when we find in our selves a willing Mind, a Joy and Satisfaction at the Returns of those Duties, and of Occasions of putting them in Practice.

Especially if, in the next Place, this be a persevering and uninterrupted Disposition, the constant Tenor of our Lives. 'Tis by being thus faithful unto Death, that we are entitled to the Crown of Life, which the Lord has promised to those that love Him. Consequently an unnatural Intermixture of white and black Days; of some Seasons for Religion, others for Sin and Vanity, would render us not less, nay, the Apostle determines, rather more criminal in the Sight of God;

God ; and such unsteady Obedience lays us under the Penalty of more Stripes ; because the Observance of our Duty at some Times, is a Proof, that we know the Will of our heavenly Father ; and our Neglect of it at others, that we are wilfully disobedient, and altogether unqualified to be of the Kingdom of Heaven, so as to have a Title to those great Blessings, both temporal and eternal, which that Relation is intended to convey and instate us in.

That it may not be objected, *Who is sufficient for these things?* since *in many, we offend all* ; it is proper to observe, that the Blood of Christ, which, at our Initiation into this Kingdom of Heaven, cleanseth us from all original Guilt, is also a sufficient Propitiation for our actual Transgressions after Baptism, and only supposes our unfeigned and speedy Repentance. We cannot then always retain our Innocency, but may recover it by the Methods established in this heavenly Constitution ; having also the Promise of such Assistances of the Spirit of God, as are amply sufficient to help our Infirmities, and enable us both to break off our Sins by Righteousness, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God.

I come now, in the last Place, to consider the *Qualification* supposed in the Text, and shall therein confine my self to what may be



be suitable to the Occasion of our present Meeting.

And indeed, when I look upon this numerous Appearance of little Children here before us, and upon you, by whose charitable Care they are educated, what can I say more moving, more capable to fill the Souls of both with an holy Joy, than that of *such is the Kingdom of Heaven*? What can more effectually possess the Minds of the former with Thankfulness and Gratitude to God, than that He has, in a Manner unknown to former Times, though most agreeable to the Methods of his Goodness, rais'd up to them Instruments of his Mercy, and by his Grace inspired you, their Benefactors, with a tender Concern for them, both in respect to the Necessities of this Life, and the Blessings of the next? Without this Relief, in the ordinary Course of things, their Lot would probably have been Misery and Disgrace, and more certainly, such a Degree of Ignorance as would have highly endanger'd, if not render'd impracticable to them, both the Means of Grace, and the Hope of Glory. The great Charity bestow'd on them, extensive as it is, leaves yet too much room for their Observation of others, whose Wants unreliev'd, and Minds uncultivated, render their Condition most deplorable. Accordingly these before us doubtless already are, and, by the Blessing of God upon the Instru-

ction you provide for them, will daily become more and more thankful to God, and to you: To Him, the Fountain and Original of every good and perfect Gift; and to you, the Streams by which the Mercies they receive are convey'd. They will bless both the prime Author, and the Hands, by the Increase of whose Labour they are thus provided for. Thus, I hope, you Children, are taught already, and that the more you grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of your Duty and Obligations to your Benefactors, you may yet, with more Effect, become their Orators at the Throne of Mercy, and from thence draw down upon them, and theirs, Blessings, on some Thirty, some Forty, some an Hundred Fold. I cannot but hope you are now capable to comprehend, how much this will be the Duty of your whole Lives, and that you accordingly have taken these grateful Resolutions.

In the mean Time, my Brethren, known unto God is this your Work of Love; and it cannot but be acceptable in his Sight, that your peculiar Care is employ'd upon such as are, in a Manner, the peculiar Care and Darlings of Heaven. The Poor and Needy, the Fatherless and Forlorn, are those that, *when their Father and Mother forsake them, the Lord taketh up*, and recommends in his Word to our Charity, in the greatest Earnestness

ness of Expression. Be then assured, that if even when the Poor cry in the Affliction and Anguish of their Souls, the Lord heareth them; how much more will He do so, when they offer up their Prayers in the Joy of their Heart? and you may thence conclude, that even this Way you already and daily receive Returns of your Charity. You may also justly esteem it a visible Blessing upon this Institution, not only that under the deplorable Decays of a Spirit of Christianity, there yet remain among us so many Instances of a pious Liberality; but that the Overseers of the Work of these Temples of the Holy Ghost, those to whom the Dispensation of these Charities is entrusted, give such universal Proofs of an unspotted Faithfulness, as could not be hoped, without an especial Influence of Heaven, in these our Days especially, when Interest prevails so much over Conscience and Duty, that the best Designs are subject to the Danger of being frustrated by a bad and unfaithful Administration. When we consider the Opposition to this good Work, that may naturally be made by ungodly Men, and must necessarily be expected from the grand Adversary of our Souls, and of all Goodness, we cannot but have Reason to be jealous of it with a godly Jealousy, and very apprehensive of the Endeavours of the Enemy, to *sow Tares among this good Seed*: The Tares perhaps of Novelty,

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which



which is ever apt to spoil what is well done, by a Fancy of doing it better; the Tares of earthly Vanity, or uncautious Emulation; an Affectation perhaps of exceeding each other in the Instructions given; which would naturally tend to a dangerous Excess; that, namely, of carrying those Instructions to such Heights as would surpass the Capacity of Infant-Years, and rather serve to entangle, than inform. You therefore that are employ'd in those useful Stations, will, I hope, make it your Business to cultivate the Minds of your Scholars in such Manner, as may instil into them the true Principles of Piety, rather than endeavour to qualify them, by other Attainments, for such a State of Life, as probably very few of them will ever be called to. It appears, I am perswaded, to those that take Cognizance of their Proficiency, that every other Part of your Care answers to that we are all this Day Witnesses of; that is, their good Performance in Singing the Praises of the Lord. Doubtless the End intended thereby is, to fit these Children to join, without Reluctance or Difficulty, in this useful Part of our Publick Devotions. It is accordingly highly laudable, that they are, as we have heard, so sufficiently taught to acquit themselves well in this respect. But give me leave to observe to you, that such an Excellence this Way, as shall carry them very much above the Capacity of those they  
are

are to join with in these Offices, may not be altogether without Inconvenience. It is already Matter of Complaint, that, in several Congregations, five or six Persons that sing well, make all the rest keep Silence, discouraging them from bearing a Part where they are so much out-done; and that naturally tends to stir up those that do better, to some Degree of Pride.

I would add, that as you all see and observe, how very decently these Children before you, appear in the Habits provided for them, even herein also it is necessary to keep within due Bounds. They that have had Occasion to frequent this Meeting, may better know, whether the first Beginnings have always been observed; or whether, by Degrees, any Additions have been made. If it be the latter, let me, without the Blame of affected Moroseness, advertize, that this also may have a dangerous Effect. It is doubtless your Intention, that these Objects of your Charity be so educated, as that they may hereafter become useful in inferior Stations; and therefore whatever exceeds now, what may reasonably be expected to be their Lot afterwards, may be too much, and ought to be avoided, least, instead of the Principles of Piety, they should, by your too great Indulgence, imbibe those of Pride.

In these Cases therefore, our best Security, under the Blessing of God, is a strict Adhe-

Adherence to those plain, pious, and easy Rules, upon which this Work was first begun, and has hitherto been carried on with so much Success. Upon that Foot, I hope we shall proceed; and that any Deviations from it, will always be carefully avoided.

My Brethren, you have begun in the Spirit; *you have hitherto run well*, as the Apostle speaks; let therefore nothing hinder you from carrying on this Work of the Lord, always remembering, that it is the Work of the Lord: His in the Foundation; for it is He that giveth you Power to get Wealth: His in the Exercise; for from Him you have the Will to do Good, and to distribute: His in the Management; for 'tis He that raises you up Stewards, like his Servant *Moses*, faithful in all his House: His then be the Glory, and may it ever be entirely and completely His, unsullied and unmixed with any Degree of Pride or Vanity, with any false Conceits of compensating, by these Charities, for unrepented Sins. Nay, My Brethren, let this your Zeal for the Honour of God, for the Good, both temporal and eternal, of these Objects of your Care; for the Recovery of a true Spirit of Religion, and the Reformation of the World, let it have its perfect Work in all your Conversation: As in this Case you piously dedicate a Part of your Substance to God, so in all, dedicate unto Him your whole Souls; let Him  
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be your Fear, and let Him be your Dread, and then He will also be your *great Salvation*.

I shall conclude with observing to you, in a very few Words, the Qualification supposed in this Text; and to do this, I shall only need to recur to the living Examples here present; *Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven*. The Innocency, Meekness, Humility, and Teachableness, which is observable in little Children; their Freedom from grosser Faults, from the Predominancy of such sinful Passions as are too often incident to more advanced Years; these are the Qualities that fit and prepare for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Accordingly, this Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears; from the Example of these Babes and Sucklings we are taught, *What manner of Men we ought to be*; and as they receive Benefit from our Care, so may we be enabled, by the Grace of God, to profit by the Example they set us: And both we, and they, be and remain lively Members of the Kingdom of Christ our Lord, in this World; and Inheritors of his Glory, in the Kingdom of Heaven.

*F I N I S.*

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